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Chief, Security Branch

13 November 1949

Interrogation Research Section

Establishing Subconscious Isolation by Use of Drugs

A memo from the [REDACTED] concerning their interest in the use of drugs was received by this office with great interest. This memo explained several experiments that have been conducted by the [REDACTED] F These experiments involve the use of the drug, sodium pentothal, as a "truth serum"; It further explained one successful application of the drug and another case where the drug failed, and requested further information concerning the use of this technique.

Drugs similar to sodium pentothal have been used for some time in psychiatry. The procedure is termed narco-synthesis or narco-analysis. The drug is merely administered as a means of breaking down the person's inhibitions and stimulating him to reveal the problems that exist in both the conscious and subconscious mind. Actually the procedure is merely one of several means of isolating and making contact with the subconscious mind to the exclusion of conscious resistance. It is a definite technique which necessitates a great deal of experience and technical knowledge and success cannot be hoped to be obtained by merely applying the injection and using the routine question and answer method.

Attempts have been made to use the so-called "truth serum" in conjunction with police work in both this country and law enforcement operations abroad. Consistent success has not been experienced. A great number of difficulties have arisen which have been quite discouraging to the experimenters concerned. Some individuals have experienced sporadic success while other persons have been completely discouraged by the failures they have experienced. The various "truth serum" drugs have been used to some extent in intelligence work, where also the success of the technique has been inconsistent due to the lack of knowledge of the operating procedure involved.

It has been conclusively experienced by this office that drugs can be used with a great degree of consistent success in order that contact might be made with the subconscious mind and in order that a great deal of information might be procured from this valuable source. From what information can be obtained, it appears that very few individuals are using the technique which might contribute to consistent success. In cases where success was experienced, it seems to be due to the type and temperament of the specific individual participating in the experiment. The same technique has been known to fail completely with other individuals under similar circumstances.

It is the opinion of the undersigned that the mere issuing of operational instructions and the necessary supplies would be a very inadequate contribution toward future success in the use of drugs. In order that such a technique be used successfully, personnel should be chosen with a great deal of consideration to their past experience, natural ability, and general qualifications. After such a person is secured, he should be exposed to a thorough training program

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Memo to: Chief, Security Branch From: Interrogation Research Section
Subject: Establishing Subconscious Isolation by Use of Drugs 19 Nov 49

which would acquaint him with the proper use of subconscious isolation techniques under a great variety of situations which might present themselves depending on the individual problem at stake.

If encouragement is given to non-qualified individuals in the field, serious repercussions might result thus nullifying the possibility of success in the carefully planned use of this and allied techniques in the future. The uncontrolled use of such techniques would also furnish encouragement for unfriendly countries, to utilize similar techniques which might prove to be embarrassing under the present circumstances in which we have no trained specialists in the field to nullify the application of such procedures.

6 It is highly recommended that [redacted] or any other component of CIA carefully screen their personnel, with the cooperation of I & S, in order that they might find an individual qualified to receive detailed training in the use of special interrogation aids including that of drug induced subconscious isolation. This course might consume two or three weeks of concentrated training but would furnish the field with a specialist qualified in the observation of, controlling of, or participating in the operational use of technical interrogation aids. It is further suggested that liaison be maintained with these trained individuals in order to determine their degree of success, criticize their technique and supply current technical information as it becomes available.

If the above recommendations meet with approval, it is suggested that permission be granted to organize material for a concentrated course of instruction on all special techniques involved. The amount of this instruction given an individual and the definite techniques covered would depend upon his qualifications, the time element involved, and the need for such knowledge in his contemplated assignment.

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